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Atari Online News, Etc.
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Until next time...

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China Police Put Black Boxes in Arcade Games!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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PS4 Becomes Fastest Selling Sony Console Ever in Asia

Sony has announced at Tokyo Game Show today that the PlayStation 4 is the fastest selling Sony console in Asia, surpassing both the PS3 and the PS2 by a large amount.

Not only that, but Sony also announced that because the PS4 is doing so well in Asia, PS Vita sales have gone up by a whopping 25% there. The increased PS Vita sales will hopefully give the system a bit of a boost, as it had previously been floundering ever since it was first launched.

Why do you think PS Vita sales have increased? Do you think the PS4's remote play ability has something to do with it, or is it maybe the large amount of amount of cross-buy titles?

PlayStation TV Coming to U.S. in October

Available in Japan since last year, the PlayStation TV will go on sale in the U.S. this Oct. 14 for $99.99, Sony announced. The set-top box is due to launch in Europe one month later with a price tag of 99.99.

When connected to a television, PlayStation TV provides access to a selection of PS Vita, PSP, and PS One games, in addition to allowing users to access saved movies, TV shows, and music like any other set-top box.

The system also allows PlayStation 3 and 4 players to pick up a saved game on a different screen thanks to its Remote Play feature.

Aside from the around 700 games available through the service (including God of War, Tomb Raider, and Tekken), three PS Vita games will be provided for free with purchase (Worms Revolution Extreme, Velocity Ultra and OlliOlli).

PlayStation TV has an internal storage capacity of 1 GB (expandable via memory card) and is compatible with the DualShock 3 and DualShock 4 controllers.

In the US, the device will be available in a bundle including a DualShock 3 controller, an 8 GB memory card and The Lego Movie Videogame for $139.99. No bundled offers have been announced so far for the European market.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Police In China To Fight Gambling By Putting ’Black Boxes’ In Arcade Machines

Gambling is illegal in China, super illegal, which is one of the many reasons Macao is now the gambling capital of the world. In China, gambling is often associated with video game arcades. To circumvent gambling in arcades, Shanghai authorities are now putting black boxes inside arcade machines.

That s right. Shanghai Morning Post is reporting that Shanghai public security has gotten in touch with Chinese arcade manufacturers to put in tamper detectors in new arcade machines.

In China, arcades are constantly associated with gambling. Internet cafes and video game arcades often carry signs that read No gambling allowed.

The association also comes with the fact that some arcades and net cafes have been revealed to be underground gambling dens. Gambling was the reason why there was a massive arcade cabinet destruction a few years

back.

Just last week, Shanghai police cracked down on a gambling den in the Putou district of Shanghai. Twelve men were arrested for running the den and their arcade machines and profits were confiscated by the police.

These new tamper detectors are said to work similarly to aeroplane black boxes, machines that log a plane s travel. When these chips detect a change in the arcade cabinet that isn t normal, the chip will dial out to public security.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

The Internet Braces for the Crazy Shellshock Computer Worm

A nasty bug in many of the world s Linux and Unix operating systems could allow malicious hackers to create a computer worm that wreaks havoc on machines across the globe, security experts say.

The flaw, called Shellshock, is being compared to last spring s Heartbleed bug because it lets attackers do some nasty stuff   in this case, run unauthorized code   on a large number of Linux computer servers. The flaw lies in Bash, a standard Unix program that s used to connect with the computer s operating system.

The good news is that it doesn t take long to patch the bug. At Internet infrastructure provider CloudFlare, admins scrambled for about an hour this morning to fix the flaw, which was disclosed late on Tuesday. We got 95 percent of it done within 10 minutes, said Ryan Lackey, a security engineer at the company.

Because Shellshock is easy to exploit   it only takes about three lines of code to attack a vulnerable server   Lackey and other security experts think there s a pretty good chance that someone will write a worm code that will jump from vulnerable system to vulnerable system, creating hassles for the world s system administrators. People are already exploiting it in the wild manually, so a worm is a natural outgrowth of that, Lackey said.

To exploit the bug, the bad guys need to connect to software such as PHP or DHCP   which use Bash to launch programs within the server s operating system.

There are still some important questions about the bug. One is whether other operating systems that use Bash   Mac OS, for example   are vulnerable. Another big one: How many Linux server applications and appliance-like Linux devices   things like storage servers or video recording devices   might be vulnerable to the flaw? Many of these Linux systems do not use the Bash software, but those that do could be

vulnerable to attack and difficult to patch.

In the grand scheme of things, Shellshock is not as big of a problem as, say, phishing attacks, which continue to trick Internet users, said Robert Graham, CEO of Errata Security. However, it s slightly worse than Heartbleed, he says.
It s in more systems. It s going to be harder to track them down and patch them, and you can immediately exploit it with remote code execution. Heartbleed let criminals steal your username and passwords, but it didn t make it quite so easy to run your own malicious software on a vulnerable system, Graham says.

Like Heartbleed, the new bug has been around for a long time, and was introduced in a widely used piece of open-source software. In the wake of Heartbleed, the open source community came up with some money to beef up the security of several popular open-source tools. And it may be time to add a few more including Bash to that list.

Vast Majority of Mac Users Safe from Shellshock Bash Bug, Apple Says

Apple says most Mac users are safe from a newly discovered security flaw, one that could in theory allow hackers to take over an operating system.

Known as the Shellshock or Bash bug, the latest vulnerability for the world s computers involves the execution of malicious code within a Bash shell, which is a command-line shell used in many Linux and Unix operating systems, and by Apple s Mac OS X operating system. Apple, however, says most people using its software have nothing to worry about.

The vast majority of OS X users are not at risk to recently reported bash vulnerabilities, Apple reportedly told iMore.

Bash, a UNIX command shell and language included in OS X, has a weakness that could allow unauthorized users to remotely gain control of vulnerable systems, Apple said. With OS X, systems are safe by default and not exposed to remote exploits of bash unless users configure advanced UNIX services. We are working to quickly provide a software update for our advanced UNIX users.

The Bash glitch is reminiscent of the Heartbleed security flaw that left information stored on data servers potentially vulnerable to hackers. Heartbleed was first identified in April, and an estimated 300,000 servers were still exposed two months later.

For now, it seems there s nothing ordinary computer users can do to protect against the new security flaw, with the responsibility for patching the potential exploit resting with those who manage Web systems.

Anybody with systems using Bash needs to deploy the patch immediately, Tod Beardsley, an engineering manager at security firm Rapid7 told CNET yesterday.

Net Neutrality Debate Is Reaching A Key Point

The hot-button issue of Internet service that treats all Web traffic the same - also know as Net neutrality - has been pushed off the front pages in recent weeks. But you can expect it to return with a vengeance soon.

For instance, earlier this week in Sacramento, Calif., two commissioners from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) spoke at a hearing hosted by Rep. Doris Matsui (D-Calif.) as part a series of forums about the topic taking place across the nation.

FCC moves forward with plan to allow Internet fast lane
The FCC calls the Internet we all know today the "Open Internet." According to the agency, "It's open because it uses free, publicly available standards that anyone can access and build to, and it treats all traffic that flows across the network in roughly the same way. ... Under this principle, consumers can make their own choices about what applications and services to use and are free to decide what lawful content they want to access, create, or share with others. This openness promotes competition and enables investment and innovation."

Along with hearings on the subject, the FCC has received nearly 4 million comments on its proposed Net neutrality rules, which are expected to be unveiled at the end of the year.

"Everything we do today is dependent on a free and open Internet," Representative Matsui told CBS affiliate KOVR-TV. "Net neutrality is fundamental to that. That means that nobody is actually taking charge of it. There are no toll gates."

Many advocates and consumers are concerned that without net neutrality, major Internet providers like Comcast (CMCSA) and AT&T (T) will not only control the speeds at which consumers get certain services and applications on the Internet but charge more for (or even deny access to) access to certain services or applications.

The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee also held hearings this month on Net neutrality. "Open Internet rules are the Bill of Rights for the online world," Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said in a statement ahead of those hearings. "It is crucial that rules are put in place to protect consumers, online innovators, and free speech."

Google Hits Back at News Corp Over Piracy Allegations

Google hit back at News Corp for calling it a platform for piracy and an 'unaccountable bureaucracy,' in a point-by-point rebuttal that stressed the internet search company's commitment to fighting online crime.

In Google's official blog, Rachel Whetstone, head of global communications, defended the company's practices while taking a jab at News Corp-owned British tabloid The Sun.

In the post titled "Dear Rupert," referring to News Corp executive chairman Rupert Murdoch, Whetstone said Google has invested tens of millions of dollars to battle piracy on its YouTube video website and removed 222 million web pages from its search engine last year due to

copyright infringement.

Whetstone also defended Google’s practice of ranking search results, denying that it was the "gatekeeper to the Web, as some claim."

Earlier this month, News Corp chief executive Robert Thomson wrote a letter to Joaquin Almunia, the European commissioner for competition, urging the commission to reconsider a settlement with Google over its search practices.

Thomson said Google was "willing to exploit its dominant market position to stifle competition."

Google, the dominant search engine in Europe, has been the target of a European Commission investigation since November 2010, when more than a dozen complainants, including Microsoft, accused the company of promoting its own services at their expense.

Almunia, the outgoing antitrust chief, said in May he wanted to close the case against the world’s most popular internet search engine before the end of his five-year term, but he recently announced that he would be unable to do so before he steps down next month.

Almunia’s successor, former Danish economy minister Margrethe Vestager, who will take up her post in November, will have to decide whether to continue settlement talks with Google, charge the company or drop the case.

eBay: Phishing, Hacking Attack Hitting Users Not Anything New

eBay phishing attacks continue, but the auction site holds its lax stance. These vulnerabilities aren’t new, says an eBay spokeswoman.

Injecting malicious content into the heart of eBay, an ongoing string of phishing attacks is continuing to take advantage of veteran sellers and collecting the financial details of some of the auction site’s most discerning shoppers.

While traditional phishing attempts presents web users with a malicious clone of legitimate sites, eBay has been suffering from attacks that are being embedding between authentic listings for merchandise. eBay users who stumble onto one of the malicious listings and attempt to buy the advertised merchandise are redirected into a payment portal, where their financial details are directed into the palms of hackers.

eBay has taken heat from security firms for the lack of urgency it has had in addressing the phishing attempts. After the BBC gave light to several of the malicious listings, an eBay spokeswoman said the attacks made use of common scripting languages and weren’t new to the site.

"This is not a new type of vulnerability on sites such as eBay," said an eBay spokeswoman. "This is related to the fact that we allow sellers to use active content like Javascript and Flash on our site. Many of our sellers use active content like Javascript and Flash to make their eBay listings more attractive. However, we are aware that active content may also be used in abusive ways."

eBay users Paul Castle complained to eBay about the baited listing back in February of 2014. eBay was said to have responded to Castle by notifying him that the issue had been escalated up its chain.

"I was just browsing in Digital Cameras and came across a password-harvesting scam," said Castle in an email to eBay. "[Following the link] "transfers immediately to a password harvest scam page."

The series of phishing attempts embedded in eBay’s sites comes just months after over 145 million username and password pairs were discovered to have been compromised sometime around March of 2014.

Though eBay has yet to release a formal statement on the latest series of phishing attempts, it launched a full investigation into the password breaches and delivered a report of its findings.

"Cyberattackers compromised a small number of employee log-in credentials, allowing unauthorized access to eBay’s corporate network," eBay stated in a release. "Working with law enforcement and leading security experts, the company is aggressively investigating the matter and applying the best forensics tools and practices to protect customers."

eBay advised users to change their passwords though it said it found no evidence that suggesting any of the hacked financial and personal data was compromised.

How To Use 1Password, An App That Lets You Log In to Any Account with Your iPhone s Fingerprint Scanner

One of the most unsung features of iOS 8 is right underneath your finger. Apple s new mobile operating system lets third-party apps access the Touch ID (fingerprint) feature in the iPhone 5s, iPhone 6, and iPhone 6 Plus. So now, with the free iOS app 1Password and a bit of preparation, you can log in to an online account with just a quick scan of your fingerprint.

At least in theory. Though 1Password represents the holy grail for many people the ability to both keep your passwords secure in an encrypted vault and bypass annoying log-ins by simply holding a finger on the home button it s not nearly as seamless as anyone would like it to be.

That s because the 1Password app is currently compatible with very few mainstream apps. So few, in fact, that I can list them here: Etsy, TweetBot, and VSCO Cam (those, and a few indie ones).

We hope that, as 1Password attracts more fans, the developers of popular apps will make their products work with it. In the meantime, you can use 1Password to speed through logins on websites when you re using your Safari browser. (1Password is also available as an app and a browser plugin for Mac, Windows, and Android.)

Before you take the dive, it s important to understand the security implications of 1Password. The service doesn t actually make sites like Amazon and Facebook lockable by fingerprint. Rather, 1Password uses your fingerprint to unlock its own vault, which holds your passwords to those other services. That means that you must use a super-secure password to

secure your vault, and that you must continue to use complex and unique passwords for each individual service. Otherwise, your accounts remain susceptible to being hacked the old-fashioned way.

And keep in mind that the trade-off to security is convenience. Even with 1Password, each login takes about five taps on your phone. That s probably less effort than manually typing in a password, but it s still a drag. Albeit a very necessary drag.

Here s how to use 1Password on your iPhone:

1. Download the iOS 8 app here.

2. When you open the app, it ll ask you whether you d like to sync with an existing 1Password account or start a new one. If you re new to this app, select the latter. Tap Create new vault.

3. You ll then be prompted to enter a Master Password, which is the one phrase that you ll need to access all the other passwords you store. I know, I know: You re probably already feeling password fatigue. But make a real effort here: Make it complex, long, and unique. Treat this one as the most important password you ll have, because it will hold the key to all your other passwords. I d recommend that you create a string of lower- and uppercase characters with a few symbols and numbers mixed in. Please don t make it one of these.

4. Here s the exciting part! You can enable your iPhone s fingerprint scanner to unlock 1Password whenever you open the app. This way you don t have to type in that super-difficult password you created just a few seconds ago every time you want to log in to something.

You can always adjust or expand these settings by heading to the app s Settings section and navigating to Security ? Touch ID.

5. Next comes a prompt to sign up for 1Password s newsletter, but that s not necessary. You ll also be given a choice of whether you d like to sync your data via iCloud (this may take a few seconds). If you use Dropbox or another cloud storage service, skip this step. You can always add those accounts later. When you re ready to begin, tap Let s go! (1Password s exclamation point, not mine).

6. You ll be brought to a Categories page. This is where you ll be able to create and organize your many digital accounts, credit card information, and form fodder. To create your first one, tap the + button in the upper-right corner of the screen.

7. Whenever you want to enter a new piece of information into the vault, you must first categorize it. I m guessing you ll be using this tool primarily for log-ins, so let s start there. Tap Login.

8. You ll be asked to name the account and type in your username. Below that, there ll be an auto-generated password.

The idea here being that if this is a brand-new account, you can automatically use this ultra-strong password to access it. Chances are, however, that you ve already established log-in information for sites like Facebook and Amazon. It might be safer to change your password to a random string of letters and numbers, but that involves actually logging into the website in question and resetting that info. If you d rather not do that right now, simply delete that section and type in your

password for that service.

Below that, you ll see a place to enter the name of the site this log-in works for. You can type something like Amazon.com, and 1Password will automatically generate the company s symbol in the log-in profile.

Don t celebrate just yet you re far from done. Next up, you ll need to open up Safari and tap the Share button at the bottom of the screen.

Swipe left over the lowest tier of icons all in gray until you see the More icon. Tap it.

10. You ll see a page titled Activities. At the very bottom of it, there ll be an option to enable 1Password.

11. When you re done, go back to the share options. The 1Password icon should now show up in your choices. If you don t want it to be so hidden, then simply hold your finger on the app icon and drag it to the left.

Phew; now you ll never have to do that again. Good riddance.

12. It s time to go to a website you d like to log in to. For this to work, you have to have first created a log-in profile for this site within the app, obviously.

Tap the Share button and select the 1Password icon.

The 1Password vault will show up. At this point, you can either enter your master password or hold your finger down on the home button for Touch ID.

13. 1Password will automatically analyze what website you re on and generate the best log-in option. In this case, it automatically recognizes Amazon. Tap the name.

14. Your login information will load, and then you ll have to tap whatever Sign In button the site provides.

And now you re done. Well, sort of. You ll need to create profiles for every other log-in or credit card you feel like having on hand. Needless to say, this is a project you might have to set aside some time for (or, for the advanced user, you can synchronize your mobile version of 1Password with the copy running on your Mac or PC).

It takes a while, but in the long run it ll be worth it.

Google Finally Stops Forcing You To Use Google+

When Google+ first launched back in 2011, Google pegged the social network as the future of the company, even going so far as to force users to create a Google+ account in order to use Gmail, Google Docs and almost every other Google-owner service.

Finally, after years of complaints, a new No Thanks button allows you to avoid this process and just create an account for that individual platform. It looks like Google is finally accepting Google+ s fate.

Forcing users to sign up for a platform they didn t actually want to use, probably wasn t a good idea.

Over the last few months, Google has been slowly separating many of its popular platforms from Google+. Earlier this month Google separated Hangouts, its video calling and chat service, from Google+, and back in August, Bloomberg reported Google has plans to also unlink its photo service from Google+.

Google+ s failure as a social media platform doesn t mean it wasn t useful, in fact, its image-backup service and ability to post to specific groups of friends, were great and useful. The platform just couldn t compete with much larger and more established social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Many people also likely didn t want to sign up for yet another social network.

These changes follow the creator of Google+, Vic Gundotra, leaving Google a few months ago. It s widely speculated Google has plans to turn Google+ into a product rather than a social network.

Back when Google+ first launched the platform combined Gmail, YouTube, Blogspot and various other Google services, sharing user data from different Google service in one central place.

It s unclear what Google s future plans are for Google+. It s possible that at some point in the future Google+ could slowly disappear, just like other Google platforms like Google Reader.

Iran Chief Prosecutor’s Ultimatum: 30 Days To Block Social Media

In a move to roll back the limited political and social liberalization experiment introduced by Iran’s reformist President Hassan Rouhani, the country’s hardline conservative judiciary has given the government one month to block WhatsApp and other social media and messaging services.

Chief prosecutor Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei accused Communications Minister Mahmoud Vaezi of failing comply with earlier directives to cut off social networking sites and apps "with immoral and criminal content."

"Despite a three month grace period to allow you and your colleagues enough time, no effective action has been taken to filter out immoral and un-Islamic offenses," said Mohseni-Ejei, who was appointed first deputy judiciary chief last month.

The final warning, which was broadcast by Iranian media on Saturday, is a response to what Mohseni-Ejei says is a failure by Communications Minister Vaezi, who promised in May to introduce what he called "smart filtering" to restrict "obscene" material from being viewed or shared.

Rouhani, who has been in office for one year, has said that he views the internet "an opportunity, not a threat."

Iran, whose population is approximately two-thirds under the age of 35, has struggled with how to manage technology and the internet.

Somewhat hilariously, an Iranian judge summoned Facebook founder and CEO

Mark Zuckerberg to appear in court in May over complaints that Facebook-owned apps Instagram and WhatsApp violate privacy.

What is Ello? And Why Is It Being Called The Anti-Facebook?

You've probably never heard of Ello, but you will soon.

Ello being called the anti-Facebook. No adds. No tracking. No marketing.

"We believe a social network can be a tool for empowerment. Not a tool to deceive, coerce, and manipulate but a place to connect, create and celebrate life," Ello says on its website. "You are not a product."

Ello is catching on fast, and some are saying that it could be the next new big social media site. It's become so popular in fact that the website become invitation only because its servers couldn't handle the traffic. Invitations are going for up to $100 on eBay.

Vivienne Gucwa, a travel blogger and photographer from New York, was able to get her hands on an invite. She told the Monitor that she joined Ello after she began seeing posts about it on Facebook and Twitter.

"I like it a lot," Ms. Gucwa says. "Ello feels like a mashup between Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook to a smaller extent. It's great that you can selectively decide what content you want to follow from your friends by separating their content into either noise or the default friend stream."

Ello was the brainchild of Paul Budnitz, founder of the high-end Budnitz Bicycles, as well as a toymaker and an author. With the help of his seven person team, Ello launched in March and began its roll-out in July. The site started with a few signups, and then people began joining in the thousands. Mr. Budnitz told BetaBeat that request to join the site went from 4,000 to 27,000 an hour. That number can't be verified, but earlier this week, Ello was one of the most searched-for terms on Google, with more than 150,000 searches in two days.

Ello is clean and simple and let[s] us connect with our friends and see awesome stuff, without feeling manipulated by a big system that was making social networking no fun, Mr. Budnitz told The Wall Street Journal.

A lot of social media sites have tried and failed to compete against Facebook. Think Google+, Diaspora, iTunes Ping. None of them worked, but Ello could be different.

I don t know if it s going to ever be the next big thing, but it is definitely in the right place at the right time, said Christopher-Ian Reichel, a user-experience executive in New York, told The Wall Street Journal. Reichel added that the site is buggy and lacks content, but people are still joining. Facebook is at a critical moment where entire segments of its audience are all looking to jump ship.

Many Facebook user are disgruntled by Facebook's tracking of users and the recent manipulation of news feeds to see how people reacted. And members of the LGBT community became extremely upset when Facebook announced that all users must use their legal names. Many in the LGBT

community were upset that they were kicked off of Facebook for failing to comply with the new mandate, including well known drag queen RuPaul.

Artists, bloggers, people who are concerned about privacy, people who have had problems with stalkers, celebrities, and members of the LGBTQ community sometimes choose not to use their real names out of personal preference, or to protect themselves, Mr. Budnitz told BetaBeat. All these people are being kicked out of Facebook.

Gucwa, who is still on Facebook and has more than 400,000 followers, she says she can understand why people want to leave.

"Facebook seems to have reached a plateau over the last few months," she says. "Between issues with their algorithm and the newsfeed and the recent drama with names, I think a lot of people are waiting to see what else is out there."

Because of network effect, users have stayed on Facebook, even if they are upset at the company, because that is where their friends are. But if Ello can begin to attract people away from Facebook, then the company could be a legitimate competitor in social media.

Without any advertisements on the site, many are questioning how Ello is going to make money. Andy Baoi announced that Ello received $435,000 in seed money in January from FreshTracks Capital, a venture capital group.

Mr. Baoi wrote in an Ello post, "Building something like Ello takes money. [Venture capitalists] don't give money out of goodwill, and taking VC funding even seed funding creates outside pressures that shape the inevitable direction of a company."

But Ello said they do have a way to make money, but exactly how much money it will bring in is another question.

"Very soon we will begin offering special features to our users. If we create a special feature that you like, you can choose to pay a very small amount of money to add it to your Ello account forever," Ello states on its website.

Ello is still in beta mode, and there are some glitches with posting pictures and searching for friends.

"I think people need to remember that Ello is still very much in beta and that the developers have a lot planned for the site" Gucwa says. "They have a rather robust features list including features that are coming soon."

As with any social network, getting users is important. But if enough people are disgruntled with Facebook's policies, Ello could be there to take them in.

Adobe Buys Photo Editing Startup Aviary

Adobe has acquired popular photo-editing toolkit Aviary for an undisclosed amount, the companies announced.

Aviary provides developers (and outside companies like Yahoo) with a set

of photo-editing tools they can build into their own apps, and that s exactly why Adobe wants it. The acquisition accelerates Adobe s strategy to make Creative Cloud a vibrant platform for third party apps, through a new Creative SDK, Adobe s press release states.

Adobe s new Creative SDK (Software Developers Kit) provides access to Creative Cloud APIs, enabling developers to add features to their apps such as accessing files stored in Creative Cloud, pulling elements out of Photoshop files, and applying image-editing tools from the cloud. It s currently under development, and Adobe plans to offer a beta version in the next few months, it stated. The addition of Aviary will give the company additional tools that it can add to that SDK, as well as the ability to reach many iOS and Android developers already using Aviary s toolkit.

Aviary s tools have become quite important when it comes to editing images on other services, and Aviary has seen 10 billion photos processed through the service last year alone, as VentureBeat reported back in April. In addition to a toolkit for developers, Aviary also offers a popular iOS and Android app for editing photos, also called Aviary.

Aviary will continue operations as usual for now, which will include providing support for the Aviary SDK, according to CEO Tobias Peggs. The Aviary team will also work closely with Adobe-owned creative community Behance and Adobe s creative cloud platform.

Founded in 2007, the New York-based Aviary previously raised $19 million in total funding from Spark Capital, Bezos Expeditions, and others.

Why Digital Marketers Should Be Excited About Apple Pay

The service creates an instant audience for new mobile marketing and customer loyalty apps, like those used by automotive retailer Pep Boys to steer campaigns.

During the first weekend of its existence, Apple s iPhone 6 found its way into the hands of 10 million people creating an instant audience for its forthcoming mobile payments service, Apple Pay. The numbers will be higher the instant I publish this.

That makes digital marketing expert Jack Philbin downright gleeful. This is like the moment I remember from 2003 when American Idol put text messaging on the map, he says, referring to the reality show s decision to let fans vote singers on or off the show via SMS. Apple Pay is that moment when marketers really have to pay attention to mobile.

That s because the new service should draw attention to an app that a far larger number of iPhone owners already have on their smartphones, Passbook. Apple s AAPL mobile wallet lets someone save and organize airplane boarding passes, movie tickets or gift cards that can be scanned for redemption. Payments are usually tied to credit- or debit-card accounts. While few brands exploit its features today, the mobile payments discussion is prompting them to reconsider Passbook s potential for reaching consumers with promotional offers or loyalty apps.

No one wants to carry 30 loyalty cards in their wallet, Philbin says. Everyone wants to take it digital.

As co-founder and CEO of marketing technology company Vibes (and chairman of the Mobile Marketing Association in North America), he s got a vested interest in that point of view. Its platform helps the likes of Allstate, Bloomingdale s, Gap and Sears create and broadcast mobile campaigns. Historically this has been done using SMS, but now Vibes helps brands do the same within Passbook or Google Wallet (a similar concept for Android mobile devices). They become a living, breathing loyalty card, Philbin says.

For an example of how this works, consider Vibes work with Pep Boys. The automotive service and retail chain uses is mobile wallet application to (among other things) remind someone about when it s time for an oil change or some other sort of maintenance. Notifications can be scheduled or triggered by proximity. Early results suggest that about one-quarter of customers who received a promotion sent to Passbook opted to save it; 30% of offers added to either Passbook or Google Wallet were redeemed in store.

So far, Vibes has managed at least 300 campaigns of this nature. Its seminar focused on the new Passbook features (held in mid-September) attracted almost 1,000 people, Philbin says.

Still skeptical about the prospects? Sure, near-field communications technology (the tap to pay approach that Apple Pay will use) accounts for just 2.5% of mobile payments. But that s still almost $8.2 billion this year, and using a smartphone for transactions is something some of us do every day: close to 15% of all Starbucks transactions in the U.S. are now made with its app (that s an average of 6 million per week). For some, it s becoming a learned behavior, Philbin says.

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